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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the validity of school and district dropout data and, if possible, to establish an accurate dropout rate for the Dade County Public Schools. Several key school files and documents were examined; prior dropout data were examined; and a survey of school personnel was conducted. The general conclusion of the study was that, given (1) the current state definition of a dropout, (2) the existing district procedures for defining dropouts and calculating dropout rates, and (3) the extent to which staffs at some schools are knowledgeable of and correctly follow these procedures, there is reason to question the accuracy of the district's and schools' dropout data. Further, the extensiveness of the problems in these three areas is such that determining an accurate dropout rate would not, at this time, be feasible. Specifically, the resources that would be required to produce accurate data would be better spent in revising existing definitions and procedures, developing computer programs to monitor and summarize school-level data, and providing inservice programs to schools' clerical and administrative staff regarding the revised definitions and procedures. (BW)

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EVALUATIVE REVIEW
OF
DROPOUT REPORTING PROCEDURES

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of Educational Accountability
1410 N.E. Second Avenue
Miami, Florida 33132

August 1983

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intended purpose of this study was to determine the validity of school and district dropout data and, if possible, to establish an accurate dropout rate for the district. The study was requested by the Office of Student Support Programs after questions had been raised regarding the accuracy of reported dropout rates.

The general conclusion of the study is that, given a) the current state definition of a dropout, b) the existing district procedures for defining dropouts and calculating dropout rates, and c) the extent to which staffs at some schools are knowledgeable of and correctly follow these procedures, there is reason to question the accuracy of the district's and schools' dropout data. Further, the extensiveness of the problems in these three (a-c above) areas is such that determining an accurate dropout rate would not, at this time, be feasible. Specifically, the resources that would be required to produce accurate data would be better spent in revising existing definitions and procedures, developing computer programs to monitor and summarize school-level data, and in providing inservice programs to schools' clerical and administrative staff regarding the revised definitions and procedures.

Highlights of the bases for these general conclusions are listed below.

A. The State definition of a dropout (see page 6) is insufficient; schools and/or districts may interpret the definition differently and thus report dropout rates that are not comparable. As examples, the definition excludes a student who transfers "to a private or public school" but does not require that the receiving school be a state accredited (or) high-school-diploma-granting institution; it does not exclude students with medical "excuses"; it does not specify a number-of-days-of-con-secutive-absence as part of the dropout criterion, and it does not specify a standard time frame during which the annual dropout rate should be determined.

B. The District's definition of a dropout is insufficient and lacks clarity and specificity. The "effective" definition consists of eight (of thirty) "withdrawal codes" (see Appendix C). In some cases the dropout codes are overlapping (e.g. whereabouts unknown, runaway from home). In other cases, the dropout code (e.g. withdrew in lieu of Board action) cannot be meaningfully distinguished from a non-dropout withdrawal code (e.g. withdrawal by Board action).

   Perhaps more importantly, there is no manual providing a detailed definition or conditions for use of the various codes. And, like the state definition, a time frame for converting consecutive absences to a withdrawal/dropout is not stipulated. Because of this lack of clarity and specificity there are differences between and within schools' staffs as to when and which of the various codes are to be used.

C. Regarding schools' compliance with existing procedures and definitions, records were examined for 25 secondary schools. For a small sample of students in these schools, comparisons were made between the District's computer (ISIS) file from which district dropout data are calculated, the Miami-Dade Community College enrollment file, and the students' cumulative folders. About one-half (13) of the schools were judged to be in "reasonable" compliance with procedures.

In the other half, the various sources of information were in conflict for 12 percent to 25 percent of the examined students' records (6 to 10 in each school). In some cases the computer file identified the student as a dropout when he/she was actually in attendance; in others the cumulative record identified the student as a dropout but the computer file showed no such record. Occassionally a student was shown as a dropout on both district records but was actually enrolled in MDCC.* At other times, dropout data were backdated on the computer file, a procedure which, according to some interviews, was for the purpose of improving percent attendance figures.

For the affected schools, reasons for the lack of compliance are varied. In many cases, the staff maintaining the data do not understand the withdrawal codes or how/when they should be used. In others, there was simply little attention given to the task. In some specific cases, the philosophy of the principal affected how the student was coded. For example, about half of the principals report giving a student awaiting Board action for expulsion the option of withdrawing before the expulsion becomes effective; the other half do not.

D. Finally, there is insufficient use of computer technology in defining, monitoring and summarizing dropout data. Specifically, students whose records indicate days of consecutive and unexcused absences, or without a recorded transcript request, etc., should be flagged as "at risk/take action." Additionally, summary reports of the numbers of students in the various "potential dropout" categories should be sent to the principal on a scheduled basis. In these and other cases, more appropriate and effective use of the computer could significantly improve both the accuracy of the data and the service to students.

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*A list of current Miami-Dade Community College students, who were admitted prior to graduation from high school, and Lindsey Hopkins Education Center students were compared to the ISIS files for the years 1979 to 1982. Results indicated that of the 19,367 students classified as dropouts, 312 are now attending Miami-Dade or Lindsey Hopkins.

While not a formal consideration in the study, note should be taken of the fact that an accurately developed and reported dropout rate will almost always be too high. There are two reasons for this. First, accurate reporting requires a specified number of consecutive, unexcused absences, e.g. 60 days, given no other information from or about the student. There will always be a number of students who exceed this number of absences and still return to the school, another school or another educational program.

More problematic is the student who transfers to another district or to a private school without notifying his/her school. In this case, the determination of dropout rests with the parent or the receiving school. If the parent or receiving school requests a transcript, the student is considered a transfer; if the transcript is not requested, the student will be classified ultimately as a "dropout." In any case, when the student returns or transfers to an educational institution and receives a high school degree the dropout rate (though accurately defined) is incorrect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations generated from the findings are listed below:

1. Request the State Department of Education to revise the definition of a dropout or provide the clarification necessary to remove the ambiguities of the present definition/interpretation.*

2. Subsequent to the new rule, revise and redefine withdrawal actions/procedures and codes to assure they are exhaustive and non-overlapping.

3. Provide a mandatory inservice, to coincide with the opening of the school year, for school registrars, attendance clerks, and any others who deal with determination of withdrawals in the school, to provide clarification of current definitions and procedures; provide a similar mandatory inservice as soon as the State definition and District withdrawal actions/procedures and codes are revised (see 1 and 2).*

4. Given the above actions, and the establishment of criteria such as the number of consecutive days of absence justifying withdrawal action, develop a computer program which will determine and flag potential dropouts and provide schools with lists of those students to be classified as "at risk/take action."

5. Provide principals with techniques to monitor computer files more closely through an inservice designed to familiarize principals with programs and regularly produced summary reports.

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*The State Department of Education is currently developing a proposal for a new rule for determining and recording dropouts. It will be the intent of the rule to designate which of those categories will identify dropouts in an attempt to assist districts in determining valid dropout rates.

INTRODUCTION

The rate at which students leave U.S. high schools, according to the Maurer ("Dropout Prevention," Phi Delta Kappan, February, 1982), has reached alarming proportions--26 percent--and if the school is located in an urban center, it has reached as high as 50 percent. The consequences for these students are well documented. Adolescents between ages 15 and 18 who leave school without a diploma show higher rates of problem behaviors, isolation from their families, and unemployment.

This study focuses on the Florida State department of Education definition and the procedures used to define and report potential dropouts. The three major questions examined during this study were:

- Is the present State definition of a dropout adequate?
- Given the State definition of a "dropout", does the Dade County School System interpretation/policy permit consistent application by each school?
- Do standard procedures exist for recording and reporting dropout data?

Since December 1975, through its Placement and Follow-up Services Program, the Office of Student Support Programs has been collecting and reporting data on students who withdraw/are withdrawn from school prior to graduation--the students typically referred to as "dropouts." These studies have been conducted within the dropout definition provided by the Florida State Department of Education.

Though fairly consistent results (from school to school) have been obtained, the validity of these results and the reliability of the procedures used by the data sources (school registrars/attendance clerks) is sometimes questioned. Additionally, the Office of Student Support Programs has been challenged as to the validity of the reported dropout rate in the light of alternative data collection/definition issues.

In an attempt to validate the dropout data, and to establish a verifiable dropout rate for the Dade County School district, the Office of Student Support Program requested that this study be conducted.

This is a preliminary report and should be viewed as such. A follow-up study is planned for next year to reassess the dropout rate after the measures recommended for strengthening the reporting system have been implemented.

SCOPE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

In conceptualizing The Dropout Reporting Study, a variety of information sources was examined. This resulted in:

1. Examining several key school files and documents for the purpose of:

   (a) determining the number of students leaving school who could be classified as dropouts,

(b) determining the students' reasons for leaving school,

(c) determining if the school's manual files and the central computer file were congruent,

(d) determining if the reporting policy of each school was consistent with other schools in the county

2. Examining dropout data reported in prior years, for the purpose of identifying salient trends and issues related to the withdrawal codes used in reporting potential dropouts

3. Conducting surveys of school personnel to determine problem areas in collecting, maintaining and reporting withdrawal data.

Document Review

An array of student documents were selected for review. The documents selected were:

1. Complaint of Truancy forms
2. Individual Student Attendance cards
3. Visiting Teacher Case cards
4. Notice of Transfer cards
5. Request for Transfer to the Opportunity School Program forms
6. Administrative Opportunity School Assignment/Expulsion forms
7. Notice of Indoor Suspension forms
8. Incidents and Action Taken forms
9. Student Appraisal/Interview forms
10. Survey of Withdrawn Student forms
11. Withdrawal cards
12. Alternative Education Placement letters

Other documents selected for review included:

1. A file of all students attending Miami-Dade Community College who entered prior to graduating from high school
2. A file of all students attending the Lindsey Hopkins Technical Educational Center during the 1982-83 school year

Survey

Between February 15 and 23, 1983, a survey was conducted to identify procedures used in collecting, maintaining, and reporting withdrawal data.

The survey format was of the question and answer type. The subpopulations asked to respond to the surveys included: principals, assistant principals, registrars, occupational specialists, attendance clerks, counselors and computer clerks. A copy of the survey instrument is included as Appendix A.

Through the use of a computer program, a random sample of 25 secondary schools (17 junior high, 6 senior high and 2 alternative schools) was selected for participation in this study from a list of 76 secondary schools.* The random sample of 25 schools included six schools from the North Area, eight schools from the North Central Area, five schools from the South Central Area, and six schools from the South Area. There was at least one high school selected from each of the four areas.

The schools randomly selected to participate in the 1982-83 Dropout Reporting Study are listed below:

1. Junior High Schools

Brownsville	Filer	Horace Mann	Parkway
Centennial	Hialeah	McMillan	Ponce de Leon
Citrus Grove	Higland Oaks	Miami Lakes	Richmond
Drew	Homestead	Miami Springs	Riviera
			West Miami

2. Senior High Schools

Coral Gables	Miami Edison	North Miami
Homestead	Miami Norland	Miami Southridge

3. Alternative Schools

MacArthur - North
Jan Mann Opportunity Center

Analysis of Data

To obtain a multi-faceted perspective of the procedures used in collecting, maintaining, and reporting withdrawal data, the survey results and student files were analyzed in the following manner:

1. The response to each question was tabulated for all schools selected to participate in the survey.

2. The responses to relevant questions were compared to the appropriate information in the computer and/or school file.

3. The Dade County's Student File (ISIS) was compared to a file of Miami-Dade Community College students who entered without having completed high school.

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*The Office of Student Support Programs staff expressed concern that a disproportionately high number of junior high schools had been selected as part of this study's sample, given that the incidence of dropouts occurs to a greater extent at the senior high [10th & 11th grade] levels. However, it is maintained that the validity of this preliminary study is not affected since it deals primarily with the definitional and procedural applications which involve senior as well as junior high schools. Additionally, a greater emphasis was placed on the examination of records of students of senior high schools and potential dropouts systemwide.

4. The Dade County's Student File (ISIS) was compared to a file of Lindsey Hopkins Technical Education Center students (1982-83).

5. The total responses were tabulated for all schools and compared to the actual student file.

FINDINGS

The summary of findings has been organized in terms of the major questions studied. Appendix B contains results of the specific questions studied at the schools selected for review.

I. Is the present State definition of a dropout adequate?

There are several possible ways a student may leave school:

1) graduation
2) non-attendance/no-show, regardless of when during the school-year, with no transcript request
3) medical reason (illness or death)
4) transfer to another institution which has as a primary function the granting of an "accredited" high school diploma; this institution must initiate some activity, e.g., request transcript
5) the General Equivalency Diploma program
6) transfer to some other non-high school diploma-granting institution e.g., a state university, which returns earned credits to the high school where the diploma is then granted, as in the Governor's program
7) transfer to a vocational high school diploma-granting institution; the institution would request a transcript, e.g., business/secretarial school
8. leave school and enroll in an institution which does not grant an accredited high school diploma, e.g., business/secretarial school
9. be suspended

The dropout definition provided by the State Department of Education Administrative Rule 6A-6, 4c P.136A, is as follows:

> "A dropout is an individual not subject to the compulsory attendance law who leaves school either prior to high school graduation, or before completing a program of study without transferring to a private or public school or educational institution, and whose records have not been requested by another educational institution within sixty (60) school days during the required school year."

From the current state definition, a dropout cannot be accurately identified and/or isolated from those students who leave to continue their education in another location/system.

The original State definition of a dropout, established in 1975, included students who had been withdrawn for a period of 120 calendar days without their records being requested. Dade County, then on the quinmester system, found that this definition included students who chose to "opt out" for one nine week quinmester period. Upon the recommendation of the Dade County Public Schools to the State Department of Education, the legislation was subsequently changed to the present "60-school-day" definition.

While adequately serving the needs of the system at that time, this more restrictive definition actually is increasing the "dropout" rate by including students who, after the 60-school day period, reenroll in a public or private school, successfully complete the G.E.D., or enroll in a community college or vocational/technical school. A longer waiting period, even up to 6 months, would provide more opportunity for withdrawn students to reenter an educational program and, therefore, not be included in the annual dropout total and thus impact the dropout rate.

The terms "leaves school" and "60-school-days" are not adequately defined. The definition must be more specific as to whether the 60-school-day period begins when the student leaves or when he/she is officially withdrawn. Further, there is no preestablished schedule, such as that used for FTE calculations, for calculating and reporting dropout data.

The term "educational institution" also needs clarification. It is left to individual interpretation as to the inclusion in this category of, for example, the students who are confined to correctional institutions and are enrolled in educational programs within the institution.

II Given the inadequacies of the State definition of a dropout, does the interpretation by Dade County Public Schools permit consistent application by each school?

After visiting the twenty-five schools involved in this study, examining and comparing various documents, and talking to school and district personnel, this question was addressed more specifically as follows:

a) Are the definitions of the specific withdrawal categories sufficiently exhaustive to provide guidelines in coding student leavers, and especially to identify dropouts?

The present definitions of the specific withdrawal categories do not provide sufficient guidelines to correctly code withdrawals or to identify dropouts. The 30 withdrawal codes currently used by DCPS were developed over the year to assist in identification of specific types of school leavers. These codes are used locally and are included in the general category of "withdrawal" used by the state. The codes, defined by title only, are in some cases ambiguous, and, due to lack of clarity numerous cases of misapplication were found.

During the 1981-82 school year, 94 percent of all students withdrawing from school were coded under one of three categories: W-01 (no show), W-10 (non-attendance, over 16); or W-19 (whereabouts unknown, see Appendix C). None of these codes gives a specific reason for the individual student's withdrawal and, therefore, is not sufficient to determine whether or not the student is a dropout.

Are these definitions over-lapping, non-mutually exclusive?

b) Several defined categories over-lap and are non-mutually exclusive, such as W-10 (non-attendance, over 16) and W-01 (no-show).

If a student does not report to his school at the beginning of the school year, for whatever reason, he is considered a W-01. If, however, he fails to report for the start of the second semester, whether it is at the same school he attended first semester or at a different shcool where he may have transferred or been promoted, he is a W-10, though the only difference in condition is the time of year. At anytime during the year other than the start of the fall semester, the same student who would be considered a "no-show" in September is withdrawn for "non- attendance, over 16."

Finally, the codes W-19 (whereabouts unknown) and W-25 (runaway from home) are non-mutually exclusive. Many instances were found in which the school termed a student a runaway when, in fact, appropriate verification procedures had not been followed.

c) Are there inconsistent time frames within various components of definintions for types of dropouts?

There are inconsistent time frames within various components of definitions for types of dropouts. In those schools visited, various interpretations of time requirements were found in several categories. Time ranged from 10 to 20 days or, in some cases, no time limitations at all, before reporting a high-risk student (potential dropout) for follow-up, and from no official time to 60 days for officially classifying a student as a withdrawal. Again, the lack of procedures and definition from the state level is reflected in the different interpretations of time requirements.

d) Is there adequate use of procedures; should there be more extensive use of computer services to flag/identify dropouts and potential/high risk dropouts?

Evidence of inadequate use of procedures was found; however, the only procedures manual made available to the schools is an operational manual for entering transactions into the computerized file. It does not outline procedures for identification of appropriate withdrawal codes to be used, or provide a guideline for their application. It appears that these guidelines for computer input are adequate but there are no written procedures, guidelines or definitons for identification of potential dropouts.

There should be more extensive use of computer services to flag/identify dropouts and potential/high risk dropouts. Students who demonstrate some recognized characteristics of being high risk should be flagged to provide indicators to the school of dropout potentiality. Many dropouts had earlier established patterns of excessive absenteeism or disciplinary action.

III Given the obscurity of the State definition of a dropout, and the questions pertaining to Dade County Public Schools interpretation/policy, to what extent do the schools follow existing procedures?

While no specific analysis was made of all possible definitions of a dropout, on the basis of those examined, it is the concensus that no more than 50 percent of the schools visited are following existing procedures to an acceptable level of compliance with their understanding of the procedures. This lack of consistency produced the following questions.

a) Does failure to record transcripts cause students to be classified incorrectly as dropouts?

Evidence was found frequently that requests for transcripts, which were filed in the students' cumulative files, had not been recorded in the computerized files. Subsequent reports classified those students as dropouts. In addition, 312 of the 19,367 students who were classified potential dropouts between 1979 and 1982 were discovered to be enrolled at Miami-Dade Community College or Lindsey Hopkins Education Center. There are no records that transcripts were requested for these students.*

b) Are schools consistent in updating computer files on a timely basis?

Many schools are not consistent in updating computer files on a timely basis. In examining records at the schools, the practice of back-dating student withdrawals was found to be quite common. In practice, when a student has had numerous consecutive days of absence and is finally withdrawn, the registrar/attendance clerk will use a withdrawal date prior to the actual date. As a result, the absentee rate at the school is manipulated. In the survey, eight schools responded that they did backdate withdrawals. Examination of the records of those who indicated they did not backdate withdrawals showed frequent evidence that they also did follow that practice. As a result of this finding, one must question the validity of absentee rate reports.

During the on-site visits, most schools indicated they had a regular schedule for entering record updates; however, the estimated time spent on this activity varied dramatically (from .13-man day to 3-man days per week) and many schools had a backlog of data that had not been entered within a one-week period from the date action had been taken.

*Miami-Dade has recently instituted a procedure which will require a transcript for enrollment. This requirement should alleviate a part of the problem.

c) Is there consistency between computer files and cumulative records?

All schools participating in the study indicated that their files (computer/manual) were congruent and accurate. After examining students' records, however, and comparing those records to the ISIS the following instances were noted:

(1) Withdrawal data on the manual file differ from comparable data on the ISIS file.

(2) Withdrawal codes are entered into the ISIS file anywhere from immediately after action is taken to over one year after the student withdrew.

(3) Schools sometimes backdate withdrawal information when data is entered on the students's records (see II,b).

d) Is there insufficient verification of student files such that a student may have more than one I.D. number?

During the course of the study, examination of ISIS records showed repeated evidence that there is insufficient verification of student files such that a student may have more than one I.D. number.

Operational procedures for enrolling a new student not known to have an I.D. are outlined in the ISIS User Guide. Before enrolling a new student the guide recommends using the "last name scan" procedure to verify that the student does not have an I.D. When the "scan" is performed, the screen displays I.D., last name, appendage, first name, middle name, sex, ethnicity, birthdate, last school attended, grade level, and status. A field will indicate whether the name search was done on the student's legal name or on the student's assumed name, and will notify the user if there are additional students with the same name.

If this procedure is followed, there are enough data for comparison so that the user should be able to identify students who have previously been enrolled in the system and, therefore, there should be no instance in which the same student is assigned more than one I.D. number.

e) Is there misinterpretation of or a lack of familiarity with existing procedures?

In visiting the twenty-five schools involved in the study, examining and comparing various documents, and interviewing school and district personnel, no concensus could be reached regarding districtwide interpretation/policy and identification and reporting of student withdrawals. In the survey, twenty-two of the twenty-five schools replied that they were aware of districtwide policy. When asked to define the policy, all gave different difinitions. No one had a documented guideline and, in fact, such a policy was not available from the many sources contacted.

When asked about schoolwide policy, twenty-two schools indicated they had a schoolwide policy for indentification and reporting of student withdrawals. In several of these same schools, however, there was a lack of agreement between staff members as to the policy.

In spite of the lack of documented policy/procedures for identification and reporting of withdrawals, school staff responsible for this function operate under an á priori policy, maintain that this "policy" is official and, as such, is adhered to meticulously. As a result, an á priori schoolwide procedure is based on a non-existent systemwide procedure, which, in turn, is based on an ambiguous State definition.

In the course of the study, some procedures or actions were identified in the schools which appear to increase the likelihood of student dropouts. Records indicate a strong possibility that a student who is promoted out of sequence, i.e., mid-year, or one who is assigned to an alternative school will be a dropout. These practices, which involve removing students from their "normal" school environment, show a high correlation with the high risk/potential dropout.

This statement is not meant to imply that all such actions are not educationally sound decisions, only that they may be associated with an increase in dropouts.

APPENDIX A

This survey instrument was administered verbally during school-site visits.

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

DROPOUT REPORTING STUDY

SCHOOL _____
AREA _____
PRINCIPAL _____
REGISTRAR _____
OTHER _____
DATE _____

1. Is there a schoolwide policy on reporting student withdrawals?

____Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____
_____

If the answer is yes, does this policy on reporting student withdrawals conform to an approved policy?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

Comments(s): _____
_____

2. Are you aware of a districtwide policy on reporting student withdrawals?

____ Yes ____ No

Comment(s): _____
_____

If yes, what is the Dade County School System policy on reporting student withdrawals?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Are records of individual students and the reason for withdrawing from school maintained in the school?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____

_____

If yes, where in the school are individual student records kept?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Is there a match between the computerized student file and the school file on student withdrawals?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____

_____

If the answer is no, what is the reason for the two files not being congruent? _____

_____

_____

_____

5. Does the school have a policy of back dating student withdrawals?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____

_____

If yes, what is the reason for back dating withdrawals?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Is there sufficient time given to determine the reason for a student withdrawing or being withdrawn from school?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____

_____

7. What is the estimated time spent on updating and maintaining the school's student file? _____

_____

the computerized student file? _____

_____

8. What information is kept in the school's student file? _____

_____

9. What person(s) in your school is/are responsible for the school and computerized student files? _____

_____

10. Are records of individual students and what they are doing in terms of further education or employment maintained in the school?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____

_____

If no, what is the reason for not maintaining such records? _____

_____

_____

_____

11. What person(s) in your school is/are responsible for entering information into the computerized student file? _____

_____

_____

12. Is there a check for accuracy of the data that is entered into the computer file?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

Comment(s): _____

_____

If no, what is the reason for not checking the information? _____

_____

_____

_____

13. Does the school provide a placement service for school graduates or dropouts, depending upon the desires of the individual, to obtain gainful employment, to enroll for further education, or to engage in a combination of employment and further education?

____ Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure

If no, what is the reason for not providing a placement service? _____

W01 - NO-SHOW

14. When is a student considered a no-show?

15. What is the procedure for verifying that a student is a no-show?

16. When is a W01 (no-show) code entered into the computer file?

W05 - RELEASE FROM COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

17. What are the criteria for releasing a student from compulsory school attendance?

18. When is a W05 (release from compulsory school attendance) code entered into the computer file?

W10 - NON-ATTENDANCE, OVER 16

19. When is a student considered for non-attendance?

20. What is the procedure for verifying that a student should be considered under the category of non-attendance, over 16? _____

21. When is the W10 (non-attendance, over 16) code entered into the computer file? _____

W16 - ENLISTED IN ARMED FORCES/JOB CORPS/YOUTH CORPS

22. What is the procedure for verifying that a student has enlisted in the armed forces, job corps, or youth corps? _____

23. When is a W16 code entered into the computer file? _____

W19 - WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

24. When is a student considered for the W19 code? _____

25. What is the procedure for verifying that a student's whereabouts is unknown? _____

26. When is a W19 (whereabouts unknown) code entered into the computer file? _____

W20 - HARDSHIP, OVER 16

27. What are the criteria for withdrawing a student under the W20 code? ___

28. What is the procedure for verifying that a student has a hardship? ____

29. When is the W20 (hardship) code entered into the student file? _____

W25 - RUNAWAY FROM HOME

30. What are the criteria for withdrawing a student under the W25 code? ___

31. What is the procedure for verifying that a student is a runaway? _____

32. When is the W25 (runaway) code entered into the computer file? _____

W26 - WITHDREW IN LIEU OF BEING SUSPENDED, OVER 16

33. Who makes the decision about a student being withdrawn in lieu of being suspended? _____

34. When is the W26 code entered into the computer file? _____

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B
SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS
STUDIED AT SELECTED SCHOOLS

1. Is there a schoolwide policy on reporting student withdrawals?

Twenty-two of the twenty-five schools visited between February 15 and 23, 1983, indicated that they had a schoolwide policy on reporting student withdrawals; however, of the three remaining schools, one school was not sure about a policy, one school followed the district policy, and the other school did not respond.

2. Are you aware of a districtwide policy on reporting student withdrawals?

Each school was asked if they were aware of a districtwide policy on reporting student withdrawals. Twenty-two schools indicated that they were aware of a districtwide policy while two schools indicated that they were not aware of a districtwide policy. When those same twenty-two schools were asked to state the districtwide policy, they all gave different answers.

3. Are records of individual students and the reason for withdrawing from school maintained in the school?

All schools responding to this question indicated that they maintained individual student's records; however, after examining the student's individual records, it appears that more than half of the records reflectd a withdrawal code assigned at the discretion of the school when the staff was unable to obtain information from the student to determine his/her reason for leaving.

4. Where in the school are the individual student records kept?

The responses given by various schools were: Main Office, Registrar's Office, and Attendance Office.

5. Is there a match between the computerized student file and the school file on student withdrawals?

All schools responding to this question indicated that their files (computer vs. manual files) were congruent; however, after examining several student records, in many cases, the withdrawal dates on the manual file were different from the withdrawal dates on the computer file.

6. Does the school have a policy of backdating student withdrawals?

Of the total number of schools responding to this question, sixteen schools indicated that they had a policy of not backdating withdrawals, while eight schools indicated that they did backdate withdrawals. Results of examining student records in the sixteen schools with no backdating policy, indicated that some of those schools make a practice

backdating withdrawals or data are entered into the computer long after the student withdraws.

7. Is there sufficient time given to determine the reason for a student withdrawing or being withdrawn from school?

   All schools visited between February 15 and 23 indicated that they did spend sufficient time in determining the reason for a student leaving school; however, after examining individual student records, it was found that schools spend more time with students under sixteen than with students sixteen and over in determining the students' reasons for leaving school.

8. What is the estimated time spent on updating and maintaining the school's files?

   Each school was asked if they could estimate the amount of time spent in updating and maintaining the school's files. The replies ranged from a .13-man day to 3-man days per week. It is evident that some schools are not spending enough time on updating and maintaining their student files.

9. What person(s) in your school is/are responsible for the school and computerized student file?

   All of the schools responding to this question indicated that the registrar was one of the persons responsible for the school's manual and computerized files. Other persons mentioned as having some responsibility were: principals, assistant principals, counselors, attendance clerks and data entry clerks.

10. Are the records of individual students and what they are doing in terms of further education or employment maintained in the schools?

    Twenty of the twenty-five schools visited indicated that they maintained information on students after leaving school to further their education or work.

    After comparing a list of current Miami-Dade Community College students (students entering Miami-Dade without finishing high school) and the ISIS files for the years between 1979 and 1982, results indicated that 129 students out of a total of 1,671 attending Miami-Dade had no record of a transcript request and therefore could have been classified as dropouts.

11. Is there a check for accuracy of the data that is entered into the computer file?

    All schools responding to this question indicated that they check for accuracy of the data that is entered into the computer file. However, after examining the ISIS file, the accuracy of some of the data could

be questioned. There are indications that some students have two records with two different IDs. Further, some of the data in the ISIS file are different from the data that are kept in the schools.

12. Does the school provide a placement service for school graduates or dropouts, depending upon the desires of the individuals to obtain gainful employment, to enroll for further education, or to engage in a combination of employment and further education?

Nineteen of the twenty-five schools indicated that they provided a placement service, while five schools indicated they did not and one school did not respond. After examining records and talking to school personnel, the general impression is that only the senior high schools provide adequate placement services for students currently attending their school.

13. When is a student considered a no-show?

All schools were asked when a student is considered a no-show W-01. The responses ranged from after one day to after twenty days.

After examining the ISIS file for the school year 1981-82 and considering the eight categories of potential dropouts, 39 percent, or 2,348 students out of a total of 6,045, were classified as no-show.

Thirty-seven former Dade County Public School students who were classified as "no-show" are currently attending Miami-Dade Community College and 52 are attending Lindsey Hopkins Technical Center. However, the ISIS file does not indicate that transcripts were requested.

14. What is the criteria for releasing a student from compulsory school attendance?

The criteria given by various schools were age, parent request, court order, hardship, and area approval.

Five (of 168) former Dade County Public School students who were released from compulsory school attendance are currently attending Miami-Dade Community College without a recorded transcript request.

15. When is a student considered for non-attendance?

Each school was asked when a student is considered for non-attendance. The responses ranged from no official policy to 60 days before a student is considered for withdrawal under the non-attendance (W-10) code.

During the 1981-82 school year, 39 percent or 2,382 students out of a total of 6,045 were withdrawn because of non-attendance.

Forty-six former Dade County Public School students who were withdrawn for non-attendance are currently attending Miami-Dade Community College and 92 are attending Lindsey Hopkins Technical Educational Center; however, the ISIS file does not indicate that transcripts were requested.

16. What is the procedure for verifying that a student has enlisted in the armed forces, job corps, or youth corps?

The procedures given by various schools were: parent notification, visiting teacher verification, phone call, and written verification; however, seven schools indicated that this code (W-16) had never been used while four schools indicated that this code (W-16) was not applicable.

17. When is a student considered for the W-19 (Whereabouts Unknown) code?

After visiting all 25 schools and examining various documents, the responses given for considering withdrawing a student under the W-19 (whereabouts unknown) code were: after the visiting teacher visit, after parent contact, after a phone call to parent, police report, after ten days, after 20 days, and after 30 days.

The ISIS file for the school year 1981-82 indicated that 16 percent, or 943 students, were withdrawn because their whereabouts were unknown. The ISIS file also indicated that 53 students (listed as withdrawn under W-19) are currently attending Lindsey Hopkins Technical Education Center.

Thirty-two former Dade County Public Schools students who were withdrawn under W-19 are currently attending Miami-Dade Community College.

18. What is the criteria for withdrawing a student under the W-20 (Hardship, over 16) code?

The criteria given by various schools were: parent request, principal verification, the student being required to work, and student request.

19. What is the criteria for withdrawing a student under the W-25 (Runaway from Home) code?

The criteria used by various schools to verify that students were runaways were: parent verification, police reports, visiting teacher verification, and after ten days as a runaway.

20. Who makes the decision about a student being withdrawn in lieu of being suspended?

The responses given by the various schools were: a principal's decision, a parent's decision, a student's decision, and a combination of administration and parent decision.

21. When is a withdrawal code entered into the computer file?

The responses given by various schools were: immediately, same day, after one day, after five days, after ten days, and after verification.

Results of examining students' records in the 25 schools visited indicated that some of those schools have a policy of backdating withdrawals or the data are entered into the computer file long after the student withdraws.

22. What is the procedure for verifying each withdrawal code?

The responses given by the various schools were: phone call to parents, letter to parents, visiting teacher verification, police report, HRS report, teacher report, and placement or occupational specialist report.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

Table 1

Total Number of Potential Dropouts During the 1981-82 School Year
By Withdrawal Code

Withdrawal code		Potential Dropouts	
		Number	% of total
W-01	No Show	2,348	38.8
W-05	Release from Compulsory School Attendance	168	2.8
W-10	Non Attendance, Over 16	2,382	39.4
W-16	Enlisted in Armed Forces, Job Corps/Youth Corps	48	.8
W-19	Whereabouts Unknown	943	15.6
W-20	Hardship, Over 16	107	1.8
W-25	Runaway from Home	37	.6
W-26	Withdrew in lieu of Being Suspended, Over 16.	12	.2
	TOTAL	6,045	100.0

Table 2

Total Number of Potential Dropouts during the 1981-82 School Year
By Grade for Withdrawal Codes W-01, W-10 and W-19

Withdrawal Code	7	8	9	10	11	12
W-01	34	135	388	724	607	431
W-10	15	114	314	1022	513	234
W-19	17	29	110	138	81	95
Total	66	278	812	1884	1201	760

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

LISTING OF WITHDRAWAL CODES USED

W01 - NO SHOW
W02 - WITHDRAWS TO ANOTHER DCPS SCHOOL
W03 - MOVED OUT OF DADE COUNTY
W04 - WITHDRAWS TO A PRIVATE SCHOOL
W05 - RELEASE FROM COMPULSORY SCHL ATTN
W06 - GRADUATE - WITH DIPLOMA
W07 - GRADUATE - EXCEPTIONAL SP ED
W08 - CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE
W09 - PASSED GED
W10 - NON ATTENDANCE, OVER 16
W11 - ADULT EDUCATION, OVER 16
W12 - ATTEND COLLEGE
W13 - WITHDRAWS TO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION
W14 - COURT CUSTODY
W15 - ILLNESS, DISABILITY
W16 - ENLISTED IN ARMED FORCES
JOB CORPS/YOUTH CORPS
W17 - DECEASED
W18 - UNDER COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE
W19 - WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN
W20 - HARDSHIP OVER 16
W21 - PROTECTIVE SHELTER HOME
W22 - PRIVATE AGENCY
W23 - CONGRESSIONAL PAGES
W24 - OVERSEAS STUDY - INTL PROG
W25 - RUNAWAY FROM HOME
W26 - WITHDREW IN LIEU OF BEING SUSPENDED, OVER 16
W27 - REMEDIATION REQUIREMENT(S) NOT SATISFIED
W28 - WITHDRAWAL BOARD ACTION
W29 - VOLUNTARY ASSIGNMENT OPP SCH
W30 - ADMIN ASSIGNMENT OPP SCHOOL